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ABSTRACT

Learning through motoric experience is a vital but often neglected component of a well balanced and comprehensive education. The performance of athletic activities enhances body awareness and contributes to the holistic learning process. However, unspoken mythic patterns assumed by Western society systematically inhibit full exploration of certain areas of motion, based on gender-tagged discriminatory attitudes. Men are expected to participate in force-oriented sports; women in flow-oriented sports. This stereotypic categorization, along with other prevalent misconceptions about the appropriateness of athletic endeavour, combine to transform the enactment of natural motion into an avenue for the transition of socializing material. It is the duty of higher education personnel to redirect the emphasis in physical education away from this hidden agenda. (LH)

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GYM AND GENDER
THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF PERFORMING EXPERIENCES

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Humans ache to learn. We are genetically programmed to learn. As you and

I are assaulted by a multitude of environments, we must process those sensate experiences into conceptual patterns which hopefully help with subsequent understandings. The processing is involved and no one is exactly sure how it is organized. However, we are sure that it takes place and for eons we have sought patterns to facilitate and augment the nebulous process of learning.

Because the operation is obtuse, learning is usually measured by what is known rather than how it is learned. Thus, traditionally, education has been more interested in the product than the process.

The products of education are identified as knowledge - usually based upon factual evidence. The forms of such knowledge usually have been structured into words and numerical symbols which have permitted us to pass knowledge from one generation to the next and to build upon knowledge in sequential designs.

Learning through the use of such staid and traditional forms has been a cognitive process largely, reinforced through memorization and recall and has created the "brain trust" of our cultural heredity. Cognitive learning has had a large part in creating the mathematicians, the writers, the orators, the philosophers

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among us. It has, in fact, hatched the egg-heads.

The incubators of the egg-heads are arranged in a pyramidal fashion with the edifices of higher education capping the warming ovens. Colleges and universities are especially enamoured of egg-heads. During the years of heavy student enrollment there have been times when some administrators have hinted that life in academe would be made more simple if heads could be educated devoid of body and soul. There is always the temptation to pack the egg-heads in appropriate self-contained shells in the belief that such ova creations may be capable of scrambled interaction as an omelet of wisdom is fried on the burners of a better life. Fortunately, such an idea was never a universal dream, so it has never come to pass. Instead, higher education is increasingly attentive to feeling and doing as well as thinking.

Most of the factual evidence from which cognitive knowledge is gained is amassed via reasoning and logic. However, since humans are not capable of thinking without emotional involvement, logic is often skewed. Consequently, it is not unusual to have knowledge laced with mythology. Mythology declares truths because there is a general belief that what is accepted as true ought to be true. Factual data bear up under logic; mythology does not. Myths express wishes rather than facts. When myths abound, it is always necessary

to take into account not only what people believe but why they believe it: Such a procedure is absolutely essential when you examine the knowledge and mythology of gym and gender.

The education of the person through motoric experience rather than cognitive recall is the province of the gymnasium and its scholastic patterns of physical education and sport. It is a province which has both basked in the benevolence of educational understanding and been blasted by a bombardment of educational abuse. The profiles of physical education and sport have been made more obtuse by virtue of the fact that they have been the only areas in the school curriculum which have blatantly catered to sexism. Although there have been other areas of knowledge which have been more attractive to one sex (i.e. home economics, engineering) no other curricular offerings have been specifically designated as uniquely for males or females.

Both the sex orientation of physical education and sport and the fact that those learning patterns depend upon performance rather than being uniquely concerned about cognitive recall have contributed to a general aura of mythology regarding their educational value. No place has this been more apparent than in higher education.

To understand the meaning of gym and gender; to explore the educational

value of performing experiences, it is necessary to explore the myth, as well as the fact. To facilitate such a study, it helps to utilize what Erik Erikson has called a "didactic formula". It is a method which does not attempt to set up casual relationships or even simple sequences. The didactic formula allows us to employ what Erikson has described as "a systematic going around in circles" - not for the purpose of circumventing evidence or disregarding logic but rather as a pattern for noting the spiraling of concepts. Such a formula, Erikson suggests, may have the potential to change the way people feel.

There are five prevailing myths which are of significant influence paramount to an understanding and appreciation of the educational value of performing experiences found in physical education and sport. The myths can be identified as (1) Intellect is brain power, (2) The body is a temple, (3) Force is masculine and flow is feminine, (4) Women are weak, (5) Sport makes men out of boys. Each of the foregoing myths has sponsored a bevy of attitudes which have cast performance experiences in a certain light; a light which has had a significant influence in higher education, indeed in all scholastic endeavors. Employing Erikson's didactic formula, let us explore both fact and fiction, knowledge and myth, and even hint at passion and reason. **INTELLECT IS BRAIN POWER** - It is difficult to believe that after an era of enlightened understanding

regarding the holistic response of humans to their environment that we could continue to be mesmerized by the body-mind dichotomy. That such a dichotomy is heirarchical further confounds our understandings.

Bloom's exposition of the three behavioral domains of human learning now has been tested sufficiently to sponsor valid statements regarding the learning potential available through use of the affective and motor domains as well as the cognitive domain. The development of descriptive taxonomies which analyze each of the domains of learning has further elucidated our understanding.

We are quite sure that the perception of stimuli is not just a central nervous system response and we know positively that the processing of knowledge is as important to education as the products attained. Humans think with their soma as well as their psyche.

The theories explaining psychic knowing are much older and a little better understood than the theories of somatic knowing. Learning psychologists have hypothesized about the psychic process for almost three quarters of a century while the somatic processes are just beginning to be studied. We are now in the midst of developing human movement theory in which Franklin Henry proposes that humans have a kinesorium of understanding. Thus, all of the movement patterns which make up your life are stored in the kinesthetic receptors of

the being - the organs of Golgi, the proprioceptors, indeed in the muscle filaments themselves. Even this minute you can sense knowledge from past movement experience. The feel of balance on a bicycle, the extension of the leg in hoisting oneself up the mountain path, the change of pressure as one plunges into the deep water, the upside-downness of your understandings as a cartwheel or somersault is undertaken, the giddy anomaly of the rapid twirl, the rush of air as acceleration occurs, the panting agony of the all-out effort. Each of those understandings are as poignant to all of us as the fluttering memory of a first love, the slow burn of hatred, the drythroated gulp of anxiety, the osmotic glow of contentment. Each of these, in turn, are as meaningful as the fact that behavioral science often utilizes multivariate analysis, political power is capable of corruption, microtrons are the generators of microwaves and seven times nine is sixty three.

We perceive in a gamut of ways and then we organize those perceptions so that they have meaning in the environment in which we are called to interact. To many people the number of dependent clauses used in Shakespeare's tragedies is as important as an analysis of the three different patterns for executing a lay-up in basketball. To many, the run down the snowy slope is as important to self understanding as the discernment of euclidean theory. There is no way

that we can judge the relative importance of any learnings to the one who learns. The human intellect is defined as the capacity for knowledge and knowledge can be amassed by thinking, feeling and doing.

If it was possible to put one's finger on the throbbing core of mathematics, I would guess that it is the ability to quantify. If it was possible to suggest the central orb of language, I would maintain that it is verbal communication. Given the opportunity to identify the sine qua non of physical education and sport, it would have to be human movement. Each of those knowledges helps the individual adapt to ever changing environments. Each of those knowledges helps develop the intellect. The intellect is fed by neurological, viseral and muscular sources.

The myth of the supremacy of the brain is often nourished by individuals who are uncomfortable with feelings and limited as to movement expression. Cognitive recall is only possible through the communication of others, via language. Such a pattern is easily programmed in a scholastic setting and hence, academicians have often clung tenaciously to cognition as the superior mode of cultural transmission. It would seem that we are now at the point where we can feel comfortable with learning as a continuum rather than a heirarchy. Learning can be a moving experience. THE BODY IS A TEMPLE -

It is possible to view that entity which we label "body" in two conceptual patterns. The first suggests that the body is "object" - an object viewed by the self and others. When this point of view is endorsed, the assumption is made that the body is a thing - whether it be shell or temple - in which "you" live. Thus, I may perceive my body as unattractive, as weak, as tough, as strong, as agile, as handsome, as pretty. I make those judgments regarding the body in view of my comparisons with others, in view of what others have told me and, with respect to what I observe from my reflected image. When the body is object, it is an entity with which I work. I may strengthen my body, I may lubricate my body, I may tan my body, I may shave my body, I may rest my body, I may exercise my body, I may abuse my body or I may take good care of my body. In each case, the "I" resides within the "body" and is difficult to define. "I" is spirit or soul - the essence of being which defies explanation. When the body is object, it is possible to be so dissatisfied with "it" that one is uncomfortable living in it. Radical change may be sought by regimens of dieting, conditioning, transexual programming, self flagellation, and other alteration tactics.

Because we have been brought up to accept mens sana in corpore sano often it has been the educational prescription to treat the body as a temple. To

keep it clean, to keep it pure, to emanate a holy spirit of health, helps temple worship. When one doses one's body with alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or other ergogenics and hullucigens one is treating the temple in a pattern unbecoming to such a sanctified possession. The body as object is not me - it is where I live.

The second way of viewing body is to regard body as "subject". In this pattern, the assumption is made that "I am my body". Everything that is done, is done to me for I am a part of the "lived body". When the body is considered as subject, it is assumed that the body is the radical root of reality and that everything about being is body oriented for there is no "me" without body. Thus, if you feel unattractive, it is possible to change self and indeed this may necessitate the application of sun or oil, or a razor. You may feel better weighing less or more, exercising or not exercising, getting drunk or staying sober, getting high or playing it cool. But as you seek change, you seek to change all of you because you are your body.

Although both patterns of awareness regarding the body are a part of our culture, it is the concept of the body as object to which we have been most exposed. To this day, the best justification for physical education in the thinking of many is that it improves cardiorespiratory function and it controls

weight. It helps to keep the temple pure. Sport is justified because it conditions the body and hones it to a fine performance edge. With such an understanding, the local eleven (eleven packets of "meat of the hoof") can charge forth each Saturday afternoon to display body fitness in terms of strength and endurance.

The newer concept of experiencing being ~~in~~ the body, of knowing oneself through performance, of realizing self and accepting the responsibility of one's performance patterns, is a quite different concept to understand. It is more concerned with the processing of education rather than the products of education. It complicates evaluation and as such poses pedagogical problems. However, it is a concept so attractive to humans that they seek to elect experiences which will provide the knowledge of self. Such desires pose frightening changes for higher education, changes which some fear.

A few years ago I approached one of our vice chancellors requesting that the highly valued academic boon of quality-point-credit be accorded courses in physical education. Part of my rationale was that such courses were helping individuals know about themselves, their abilities and their adaptive responses. "Do you mean" asked my administrative colleague, with horror in his eyebrows, "that you expect to get the same amount of academic credit for physical

education as is granted for psychology, sociology or PHILOSOPHY?" "Exactly", was my assertion. "But, but", he stammered, "almost everyone would elect to take physical education rather than those academic courses which they really need". And that, I thought, ought to tell that administrator something about people's perceived needs.

Individuals are very much into the body as subject. Athletes, dancers, performers of all kinds are experiencing themselves as they learn more about the lived body, as they explore the radical root of reality. The educational value of the performance experience is not that it creates systemic integrity, not that it develops skill for play and display, not that it augments health and provides the environment for cognitive attentions. Although, performing experiences may do all of those things, the essence of performance is that it is an extension of understanding about self, ability and adaptation. The body is you.

FORCE IS MASCULINE-FLOW IS FEMININE - Performance is so essential to the understanding of self that it is natural that truisms regarding performance are concocted. The myth of force having a masculine aura and flow being under the female aegis is one of the prevailing truisms in our culture. It is assumed that males must be interested in and display a strength motif to

demonstrate their masculinity. To not care about strength if one is male could suggest that one's sexual identity was in question. Likewise, females are expected to display flow (grace, poise, demeanor, liquidity) in their movement patterns and usually this display should be done with a winning smile and apparent ease. Thus, we expect males to wrestle, box, tackle, charge, and strike. We expect females to glide, slide, elide and abide. When males turn to dance, figure skating and even certain forms of gymnastics, we are uncomfortable because there is no discernable display of force. There is the suspicion that perhaps the male is incapable of force and therefore may not be male at all. Likewise, when females turn to basketball, lacrosse, speed skating and weight lifting, there is the strong suspicion that the woman is only capable of such strength because of the real likelihood that the person is not really female.

In Olympic competition there is such a frenzy about performance patterns involving force that sex testing (though only of females) is required. Even those activities which require a modicum of power for either sex are suspect. As a matter of fact in the Olympics, only the female horse is considered to be capable of overt force.

All individuals who have worked with performers, or have been performers themselves, understand that force and flow are two components on the same

continuum. Power is needed to initiate action, and flow is needed to maintain action. Neither can be operative as a discrete entity. When we are dispassionate about the sexuality of those attributes we can acknowledge such a continuum. The force and flow found in the golf swing is a case in point. Lee Travino has no more power than Carol Mann when the club is swung. The fact that Traveno hits further says more about the myth than the fact. Ms. Mann has been conditioned since infancy to believe that female force can never be equivalent to male force. Even though she might like to ignore that imprinting, she finds herself fulfilling the prophecy which has been her cultural heritage. Edward ^{VILLELA}~~Vazquez~~, the magnificent modern dancer, and the master of ballet, Rudolph Nureyev, both display a flow that haunts the aesthetic senses. It is a flow pattern which is based upon force but a disguised force so as not to portray power. Both men have had to endure snide suggestions regarding their sexuality.

The performance experience really does not have a gender. Our heavily weighted sex expectations have limited opportunities for males and females to fully explore the recesses of force and flow. In addition, we have often inferred that force was really a national characteristic which was somehow or another related to the "two-fisted, red-blooded" national image which conquered

a wilderness and carved a niche out of natural adversity. As a nation we have not yet reached an understanding of flow.

Cultural mores promoté the mythology of force and flow and an all too eager educational community has tended to reflect those performance biases rather than assuming the responsibility for directing change. Females can wrestle, box, tackle, charge and strike and I suspect that many of them court such experiences for the same reasons that their brothers do - as an opportunity to test one's mettle. Males can glide, slide, bend, stretch, elide and abide, and I suspect that many of them desire such experiences for the same reason as their sisters - the opportunity to translate self into areas of meaning.

It has been interesting to watch our national preference for force slowly undergo change. The professional tennis matches are a case in point. There are many who prefer to watch the flow of Evert and King rather than the force of Borg and Connors. There already seems to be some indication that women's basketball will capitalize upon team flow and strategy and leave the physical game with the violence of elbowing force to the male players. If that should come to pass, spectators might have choice regarding preferential patterns of experiencing satisfaction from displayed movement.

Performing experiences depend upon both force and flow and should be

available to any who seek such opportunities of identification and adaptation. Force and flow are neuter. WOMEN ARE WEAK - It is hard to ascertain where the prevailing social myth that women are weak found its germination. Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox have suggested that since females were often in the process of child bearing or nursing that they were not employed as a part of the hunt where strength was a requisite. They also suggest that the sexual provocativeness of females barred them from the hunt and thus limited female display of physical prowess. The study of caste systems suggests that often one group advertises its characteristics by suggesting that another group is devoid of the same characteristics. Thus, males may have gained strength in suggesting that female were weak. There is additional evidence which suggests that somewhere in the Victorian era, the lord's position was accorded high social status because it was not necessary for him to have a working dame as a partner but rather could afford to support a lady. Thus, it may be surmised that many men and women came to regard the lady as non-producer of menial labor and as an exalted station to which to aspire. Such women would have to be weak.

The myth that women are weak has ordained that they be excluded from many jobs (to protect them) and that they be limited as to opportunities (for their own good). As a young girl, not too conditioned to question social patterns, I

used to wonder why all "ladies" were white.

It is blantly apparent that women are not physically weak. They have hewn trees, tilled land, hoisted bales, lugged logs, pushed wagons, drawn water, dug ditches as they worked shoulder to shoulder with their male companions in settling our country. Women have wrestled with baskets of wet wash, carried large buckets of water up and down sky scrapers with mops and brooms tucked under arm, have shocked wheat and corn, have carried sleepy fifty pound youngsters, have pushed and lifted furniture, have mowed and gardened even as men have done. Black women have done even more.

The myth that women are weak is perpetrated by comparing the mean strength score of the average mature male to the mean strength score of the average mature female. In so far as those averages are means, generalizations regarding strength can be made. The average mature man is stronger than the average mature woman. He is also larger. But there is greater difference within either sex than there are differences between the sexes so the large woman is often stronger than the small man. Besides, neither sex is weak, one is just stronger than the other under given circumstances with a specific population.

It is exceedingly difficult to find examples of strong women displayed in the literature or in pictorial presentations. A number of years ago when I

was looking for a picture of a ten year old girl sweating from physical effort,

I reviewed over 10,000 pictures in newspapers, periodicals and textbooks and

could not find one example of such a phenomenon. Expressing my consternation

to a librarian at the Congressional Library, she smiled benignly at me and

said, "But Dr. Ulrich, only horses sweat - men perspire and women glow". Be

that as it may, I could not even find a picture of a glowing young female.

Fortunately that predicament is no longer possible and we are beginning to

believe that females, too, utilize the evaporation process when they are toiling.

The characterization of women as weak has added burdens to the enforcement of some of the legislative edicts now sponsored by the federal government. As Title IX of the Omnibus Education Act of 1972 insists upon compliance as of July of this year, some individuals are excusing themselves from such an obligation by suggesting that to combine males and females into the same classes or on the same teams would immediately disadvantage the weaker female. Research evidence is beginning to amass suggesting that strength is much more a correlate of size than it is of sex and that there is no physiological reason whatsoever that the performance expectations for males and females cannot be equal, especially when size is taken into account. Concern for weak women is a rationalization.

The educational value of the performing experience is predicated upon much more than strength and endurance. But even if strength was the pivotal attribute fostering performance, it is not sex oriented. Both men and women are strong.

SPORT MAKES MEN OUT OF BOYS - It is not unusual to assume that sport is a microcosm of the society at large and that the sport experience can provide for its participants a controlled taste of the essence of life. It is upon such a assumption that the myth regarding the creation of manhood via sport has been based. The assumption has been the basis for an extension of such a myth, to infer that sport is an extension of the male ego and is needed to attest to masculinity. That myth then suggests that sport may make men out of girls who play.

It is interesting that many of the attributes which are generalized as desirable for the athlete, persevering, brave, tenacious, aggressive, stoic, driving, energetic are also attributes which are used to describe the stereotypical national character of the United States. Not unexpectedly, the same attributes are ascribed to the male of our society. The attributes used to stereotype females; soft, receptive, yielding, sensitive, compassionate, careful, are not desirable attributes for either the national character or the athlete. Thus, we tend to associate sport with men and view it under the

rubric of male. Female intrusion into this most sacred of all arenas has been viewed with distain, suspicion and panic. There is the gnawing doubt that women on the sport scene (other than as sex symbolized cheer leaders) will emasculate the male participants.

The totally irrational attempt of Little League Baseball to bar girls from playing is one manifestation of attempting to maintain male purity. The NCAA has suggested by its actions that females are a pollution and a contaminant and that they are only to be accommodated so as to be controlled. When CBS first attempted to have a well informed woman call the play-by-play action of professional football, the switchboard was ablaze with calls from all over the country suggesting that no woman had any right to inflict herself upon the hallowed ground of football announcing and that not only was it unseemingly, it was a downright affront to American manhood.

Sport does not make men out of boys, women out of girls or even adults out of children. Each sport experience is a unique adventure into an existential phenomenon of being. If knowledge is gained from such a phenomenon which makes easier other similar encounters, the individual must find this out for self. There is no automatic transfer. Breaking your kneecap on the pony league football field does not prepare you for "taking it" in the heat of

industrial strife - unless you make that conceptual application. Of course, such an experience is not a sex oriented event. Being able to exist with adversity is not male, it is human.

The temptation to claim that the competitive experience is the bedrock of our social structure is of prime importance to those who would suggest that sport makes men out of boys. Those claimants forget that cooperation is as much a facet of sport as is competition and that both social processes are useful to both sexes of our society. Norman Mailer and John Updike have both written that sport has been a part of the rites de passage from childhood to adulthood but they have seen the athletic experience in different ways. For Mailer, the experience made for aggressive manhood; for Updyke, the experience was a pejorative adolescent adventure which inhibited autonomous maturity.

Sport does process the performance experience in carefully structured ways. Sport does contain the seeds of transfer behavior if such transfer is highlighted. Sport makes participants out of humans who desire to test self against undiscerned environments. Sport provides opportunities for self realization for all people.

As humans ache to learn, you and I in higher education can highlight an arena of action in the gymnasium. The action is based upon the facts that

learning can be a moving experience, the body is the person, performance patterns are neuter, all people are strong and sport provides opportunities for self realization. Higher education has awakened to the value of doing and feeling, as well as thinking and many of us who are part of this environment are sensitive to the historical restrictions which have been imposed because of sexual bias.

The processing of learning is as important as learning products and as egg heads learn to move, so performers will learn to cogitate and reason. The mythology surrounding the educational value of performing experiences must be encountered and educators of integrity must lay to rest their biases as we venture into the emerging twentieth century of human understanding. Learning is achieved by performance, performance which is devoid of gender overtones, performance which liberates the individual's academic reserves. Gentlepeople, let us regard the gymnasias and playing areas of our country as the backdrop for a moving education.